

INDEMNITY TO JOHN WILLIAMSON

FEBRUARY 27, 1926.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed

Mr. PORTER, from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 8168]

The Committee on Foreign Affairs, to which was referred H. R. 8168, "Authorizing the payment of an indemnity to John Williamson on account of the death of Daniel Shaw Williamson, a British subject, who was killed in East St. Louis, Ill., on July 1, 1921," having considered the bill carefully, reports it to the House without amendment and with the recommendation that it do pass.

The facts which seem to your committee to justify and require passage of this bill are set forth in a letter of December 10, 1924, addressed to the President by the Secretary of State, and transmitted to Congress with a special message from the President on December 13, 1924.

The President's message and the letter of the Secretary of State are as follows:

To the Congress of the United States:

I transmit herewith a report from the Secretary of State in relation to the claim presented by the British Government for indemnity on account of the death of Daniel Shaw Williamson, a British subject, at East St. Louis, Ill., on July 1, 1921. I recommend that Congress authorize an appropriation and that an appropriation be made to effect a settlement of this claim in accordance with the recommendation of the Secretary of State.

CALVIN COOLIDGE.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, December 13, 1924.

THE PRESIDENT:

I deem it necessary to bring to your attention a claim presented by the British Embassy at Washington for indemnity on account of the death of Daniel Shaw Williamson, a British subject, 22 years old, who was killed at East St. Louis, Ill., on July 1, 1921. A coroner's jury found that Mr. Williamson came to his death as a result of gunshot wounds inflicted by a police officer.

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It appears from testimony taken at the coroner's inquest that while making his way peaceably toward his home Mr. Williamson was accosted by two policemen in plain clothes and ordered to halt.

For some unknown reason, possibly because of impaired hearing, because of noise made by the motor cycle in which the policemen were traveling, or because he did not know that the men who approached him were policemen, Mr. Williamson disregarded the order to halt and continued to move toward his home, which was only a short distance away. One witness at the inquest testified that a shot was fired by the policemen, after which Mr. Williamson started to run, when a second shot was fired; but the policeman who did the shooting testified that Mr. Williamson ran before he fired the first shot. When Mr. Williamson reached his home he fell mortally wounded and died a few minutes later.

It seems to be established by the testimony taken at the coroner's inquest that Mr. Williamson had been engaged in conversation with his associates; that the policemen were in plain clothes and that when they first accosted Williamson they were within a few feet of him and could easily have arrested him without resort to the use of firearms; and that the shooting was done with a riot gun. There apparently was no reason to suspect that Mr. Williamson had committed, or intended to commit, any offense, and it is believed that in the circumstances the use of a riot gun was unwarranted. On learning of the lamentable incident Mr. John Williamson, the father of Daniel Shaw Williamson, who resides at 33 Fishcross by Alloa, Scotland, came to the United States from Scotland to ascertain the actual circumstances attending the death of his son. He incurred considerable expense and forfeited his salary for the period of his absence from home. The British Government considers that the father of the deceased is entitled to an indemnity, and has presented a claim in the sum of \$2,000. Correspondence with the Governor of Illinois has not resulted in steps being taken to indemnify Mr. John Williamson and has not revealed the existence of any remedy which could be pursued with a view to recovering an indemnity.

As the shooting of Daniel Shaw Williamson appears from information available to the department to have been unwarranted and as it seems certain that no redress will be afforded by the State of Illinois or the municipality of East St. Louis, I recommend that the Congress be requested to authorize an appropriation for the payment to Mr. John Williamson of the sum of \$2,000 requested by the British Government as indemnity for the death of his son, Daniel Shaw Williamson, and to appropriate the amount mentioned as an act of grace and without reference to the question of the legal liability of the United States.

As a summary of the essential facts regarding the claim is embodied in this communication, it is deemed unnecessary to accompany it with copies of the correspondence in this case. All or any part of the correspondence will, of course, be furnished should the Congress so desire.

It will be noted from the inclosed communication from the Director of the Budget, to whom the matter was referred, that the proposed action is not in conflict with the financial program of this Government.

Respectfully submitted.

CHARLES E. HUGHES.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 10, 1924.